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Mr. Alex. Gov. Hoeven
Mr. Gustin
Thank you

USDA Farm Bill Forum
Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns
Minot, North Dakota
July 26, 2005

Subject: Farm Programs

Not a rancher
Cattlemen or
Oilman

My name is (Jeff Knox) Jeff Knox, I am a crop farmer from Ray, North Dakota in the northwest corner of the state. Over the past 10 years my family and I have worked hard to diversify the crops that we grow. Our farm produces a variety pulses (dry peas, lentils, chickpeas) cereal grains (Wheat, barley, corn) and oilseeds (canola, soybeans, sunflowers, flax).

I believe farm policy should encourage farmers to take advantage of market opportunities and reward them for crop diversity and management that are good for the environment. Producing a safe and environmentally sustainable food supply is important to all of us. I believe it is in our countries best interest to maintain a strong agricultural base. Every country supports their agriculture in some form or fashion. Despite our best efforts in the WTO negotiations, I do not see that changing anytime soon. The following farm programs must be sustained in the next farm bill:

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1. **Marketing Loan Program/LDP-** The Marketing Loan Program is the single most important farm program tool used on my farm. This program provides some protection when prices go in the tank and pays me nothing when prices are good. I like this program because it allows me to take advantage of market opportunities and satisfies my bankers' need for some downside risk coverage. This is a good program that needs to be continued because it allows me to include environmentally sound crops with targeted market opportunities.

2. **Direct & Counter Cyclical Program-** I fully support the continuation of the direct and counter cyclical program payments that have sustained my farming operation and the local businesses that support my farm. Direct and Counter Cyclical payments are the best form of Rural Development because all of these payments go back into the community.

3. **Planting Flexibility-** The best part of the 1996 farm bill was the freedom to plant a crop based on market signals instead of base acres. Planting flexibility must be continued and expanded in the next farm bill. Chickpeas (Garbanzo beans), for example, are currently considered a vegetable crop and are not an eligible crop to be planted under farm program rules. Chickpeas are an important crop to my farm operation and I want the flexibility to grow them as an eligible farm program crop when market signals warrant.

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I would like to thank you for coming to Minot and listening to our ideas.

Again,

Jeff Knox